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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FIVE PUC ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS CHARGED WITH RACKETEERING AND EXTORTION

Defendants Allegedly Received Cash Payoffs From Taxicab Company Owners And Reps Whose Taxis The Defendants Were Responsible For Inspecting

PHILADELPHIA – United States Attorney Patrick L. Meehan and F.B.I. Special Agent-in-Charge Jack Eckenrode today announced the filing of a 63-count indictment¹ charging five PUC enforcement officers with racketeering and extortion. According to the indictment, from at least 1990 through December 2004, defendants Sant R. Harrison, Edwin Mobley, Leroy Patterson, John E. Jones, and Don Russell, used their positions as PUC officers and managers and their authority to regulate and inspect taxicabs to obtain cash payoffs of at least \$76,865.

“Cash hidden in envelopes or within handshakes – it was the old fashioned way of earning extra money in a corrupt culture,” said Meehan. “For 14 years, this was a way of doing business and the message was, if you pay the right people, you get results. In addition, when you step into a cab, you have the right to expect that the driver is qualified and that the vehicle is mechanically sound. In this case, because of the actions of these defendants, you literally had no idea what you were getting into.”

The PUC’s Motor Carrier Division regulates passenger service carriers regarding rates, geographical area, customer service, safety, and insurance. Taxicabs operating within the City of Philadelphia are subject to PUC regulation. PUC enforcement officers conduct taxicab inspections annually and randomly throughout the year to ensure vehicles meet all Pennsylvania equipment and inspection standards.

As part of the racketeering activity, the defendants performed incomplete inspections for taxicab companies whose representatives paid them in cash. The defendants also permitted drivers who had not legitimately passed tests to receive their certifications in exchange for cash.

The taxicab company reps concealed their payoffs to the defendants either in envelopes or within their handshakes. Some of the taxi company reps made payments to the defendants on an annual basis at the time of their inspections in amounts ranging from \$50 to \$1,000.

¹An indictment is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

In addition, the defendants arranged for favorable and convenient inspection times for taxicab companies whose representatives paid cash to them and cancelled fines that were written to drivers in exchange for cash payoffs.

As employees of the PUC, defendants were prohibited by law from using their public office for private gain and from soliciting or accepting any item of monetary value, including gifts and loans, with the intent to be influenced, from any person, firm, corporation, and other business or professional organization seeking official action from, doing business with, or whose interests may be affected by the performance of their duties.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and has been assigned to Assistant United States Attorneys Amy L. Kurland and Judy Goldstein Smith.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE DEFENDANTS

NAME	ADDRESS	YEAR OF BIRTH
SANT R. HARRISON	8200 block of Bayard Street, Philadelphia, PA	1938
EDWIN EARL MOBLEY	1500 block of Beverly Road, Philadelphia, PA	1942
LEROY PATTERSON	8400 block of Lyons Place, Philadelphia, PA	1941
JOHN E. JONES	1100 block of Custis Place, Philadelphia, PA	1948
DONALD RUSSELL	200 block of Colonial Street Philadelphia, PA	1955

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<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/pae/>*

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